2

Something's Wrong With Us

NATSUMI ANDO

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2

Tsubaki Takatsuki

The heir to the historic *wagashi* shop Kogetsuan. Proposes to Nao without realizing that she is his childhood friend.

Nao Hanaoka

A *wagashi* confectioner. Making *wagashi* gives her purpose and a connection to her late mother.

Seeing the color red gives her severe heart palpitations.

CHARACTERS

The Proprietress

Tsubaki's mother. She lost her husband (Tsubaki's father) 15 years ago, and has been desperate to make Tsubaki the head of Kogetsuan ever since.

Old Master Takatsuki

Tsubaki's grandfather. The head of Kogetsuan. Mistreats Tsubaki because he is convinced that Tsubaki isn't his real grandson.

STORY

As a child, Nao met Tsubaki at Kogetsuan, the historic *wagashi* shop where her mother worked as a live-in confectioner of traditional Japanese sweets. One fateful day, her mother was arrested on murder charges and Nao was forced to leave.

15 years later, Tsubaki and Nao meet again, clashing head-on in a test of their *wagashi*-making skills. Tsubaki doesn't recognize Nao, but suddenly asks for her hand in marriage.

What could Tsubaki possibly want...?

Desperate to know the truth about her mother's death, Nao accepts the proposal and starts living at Kogetsuan.

But before long, disaster strikes... Nao falls into someone's trap, creating a grave problem for the famed shop...

CHAPTER 6
The Cost of Lying ——— 5

CHAPTER 7
The Golden Rule ——— 35

CHAPTER 8
Tasty Bean Paste ——— 63

CHAPTER 9
Like a Married Couple ——— 95

CHAPTER 10
In One Room ——— 123

I PICKED UP THEIR CALL.

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW.

...WHEN YOU LIE.

LOOK WHAT HAPPENS...

CHAPTER 6
The Cost of Lying

I'M...

...SO VERY SORRY.

ARE YOU FEELING BETTER?

Y-YES.

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE SUDDEN SCARE.

LOOK, SEE?

TSUBAKI-SAN BROUGHT US SOME NEW SWEETS.

COME NOW, LIFT YOUR HEAD.

...*WAGASHI* CONVEY A MESSAGE...

...FROM THOSE WHO GIFTED IT.

AS I UNDER-STAND IT...

THAT'S GOOD.

U-UM...

THE NEXT TIME—

AND NAO-SAN...

...YOUR MESSAGE READS LOUD AND CLEAR.

THAT'S IT.

WE'LL NEVER BE ALLOWED...

...IN THIS SHOP AGAIN.

...

WHO...?

...YOU LOOK AWFUL.

...WOULD DO THAT TO THE SWEETS?

WHO...

AFTER YOU LEFT...

I CALLED SHIRAFUJIYA JUST TO CONFIRM.

WHY DID YOU LIE?

ALL I KNOW...

THEY TOLD ME...

"WE NEVER ORDERED ANYTHING."

...IS THAT WE LOST ONE VERY IMPORTANT CUSTOMER.

THA—

AT THIS POINT, I DON'T CARE *WHO* THE CULPRIT IS.

IT'S WHAT I ALWAYS WANTED.

WHY?

EVEN THOUGH THEY TOOK MY FAMILY.

EVEN THOUGH THEY STOLE MY HAPPINESS.

I BROUGHT THEM AS A GIFT.

ARE THOSE SWEETS FROM KOGETSUAN?!

Bag: Kogetsu

WOW, I CAN'T WAIT!

DAN-GO *FOR VIEWING SAKURA IN BLOOM.*

OHAGI *FOR THE BUDDHIST EQUINOX.*

KURI KINTON *IN THE FALL.*

EVERYONE LOVES SWEETS FROM KOGETSUAN.

I WISH THEY WERE GONE.

ONCE KOGETSUAN IS GONE FROM THIS WORLD...

I'M SURE MY SUFFERING WILL BE OVER.

Sign: Kogetsuan

...I'LL NEVER KNOW THE TRUTH...

BUT...

...IF THIS PLACE DISAPPEARS NOW...

スッ

スッ

スススススッ

WH-WHOA!

Uniform: Kogetsu

WHY NOT DRINK TEA IN YOUR ROOM?

YOU'RE, UM... JOJIMA-KUN, RIGHT?

BUT IT'S SO COM-FORTING HERE.

IT SOOTHES MY SOUL.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING THERE?

YOU SCARED ME.

OH. I'M SORRY, I GOT LOST IN MY THOUGHTS...

WAY TO WEIRD OUT THE NEWBIE, NAO.

OOPS.

OR LIKE, THE BIG CLOUDS OF STEAM...

...AND WELL-USED TOOLS.

OH!

THE AROMA OF *AZUKI* BEANS!

YES, I TOTALLY UNDER-STAND!

DOESN'T IT GET YOU IMAGIN-ING... HOW THE SWEETS WILL TURN OUT?

YES! I FEEL FULL JUST FROM THINKING ABOUT IT!

WHY WERE YOU LOST IN THOUGHT?

...

OH, IT'S JUST...

...ABOUT THE SWEETS FOR SHIRA-FUJIYA...

TWINGE

I HAVEN'T TALKED LIKE THIS IN AGES!

I GUESS I END UP COMING HERE A LOT, TOO.

JUST LIKE YOU, NAO-SAN.

Uniform: Kogetsu

光月

EVEN THE PROPRIETRESS CHECKED THE SWEETS.

OH, GOOD THING WE MANAGED TO TAKE THAT ORDER.

THEY'RE KOGETSUAN'S BEST CUSTOMER, AFTER ALL.

COULD IT BE...

THE PROPRI-ETRESS ...?

SHE *CHECKED* THEM...?

HUH...?

SLAM

THIS MORN-ING.

I ONLY CAUGHT A GLIMPSE...

...BUT I REMEMBER, BECAUSE SHE'S NEVER DONE THAT BEFORE.

OH.

YOU'RE AWFULLY LATE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

MY THINGS!

I PACKED THEM FOR YOU.

SOMEONE WHO WOULD OFFEND A CUSTOMER HAS NO PLACE HERE.

OH DEAR, WHAT'S WITH THAT FACE?

THIS IS WHAT YOU WERE AFTER ALL ALONG, ISN'T IT?

I SEE.

YOU WANT MONEY.

HERE.

GOODBYE, NAO-SAN.

SHE REALLY DID THAT...

...JUST TO KICK ME OUT...

I'LL MAKE AMENDS TO SHIRAFUJIYA SOMEHOW.

I'M NOT LEAVING.

WHAT A BRIGHT-RED MANICURE... QUITE ILL-SUITED FOR KIMONO, DON'T YOU THINK?

THOSE NAILS.

WHAT ARE YOU—

I'M GOING TO MARRY TSUBAKI-SAN.

I'M NOT LEAVING UNLESS HE TELLS ME TO.

...

WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?

YOU...

...LITTLE PEST!

BUTTER-
FLIES...

ONLY MATE WITH OTHER BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLIES LIKE THEMSELVES.

THEY WOULD NEVER WELCOME A MOTH AS FAMILY.

WE DON'T WANT ANY OUTSIDERS.

HAVE YOU FOUND HER YET?

SO, TSUBAKI.

...

THAT AGAIN?

YOU KNOW, THAT GIRL...

...THE ONE YOU CALLED "SAKURA" WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE.

...

TSUBAKI-SAN,

THERE'S A PHONE CALL FOR YOU.

EXCUSE ME.

RIGHT NOW,

YOU SHOULD TAKE YOUR MEDICINE.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I VALUE MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD?

TSUBAKI.

PLEASE, MA'AM!

STOP!

PLEASE STOP!

WHY WOULD MY SON CARE ABOUT SOMEONE LIKE ***YOU*** ?!

JUST LEAVE ALREADY!

YOU'LL ***NEVER*** INHERIT THIS PLACE.

INSIDE
THAT IS...

スリッ
ZLIP

...!

HOW FILTHY.

DON'T EVER SET FOOT IN KOGETSUAN AGAIN.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

TSUBAKI-SAN.

SHE SAYS SHE'S LEAVING.

I ASSUME THAT'S WHAT YOU INTENDED AS WELL.

DON'T CRY.

YOU KNEW RIGHT FROM THE START.

NO ONE HERE...

...IS GOING TO LEND YOU A HELPING HAND...

TSU...

TSUBAKI-SAN?!

BUT ONLY IF...

NAO WILL STAY HERE A WHILE LONGER.

WHA—

...*"NAO-SAN MAKES THEM,"* *THEY SAID.*

WE GOT AN ORDER FROM SHIRAFUJIYA.

THEY WANT 20 *MONAKA.*

YOUR TEA IS JUST THE BEST, SENSEI.

Sign: Shirafujiya

I PLACED AN ORDER WITH KOGETSUAN,

JUST LIKE YOU ASKED.

BY THE WAY...

NO, NO.

I STILL HAVE LOTS TO LEARN.

ONCE YOU TASTE HER SWEETS,

YOU MIGHT UNDERSTAND.

PERSON-ALLY, I DON'T UNDER-STAND...

...WHY TSUBAKI-SAN WANTS THAT GIRL FOR HIS WIFE.

LET'S JUST WAIT AND SEE.

COME TO THE KITCHEN.

I'LL TEACH YOU ABOUT KOGETSUAN'S BEAN PASTE.

MONAKA IS NAMED AFTER THE MID-AUTUMN MOON.

Monaka: Kogetsu

THE BEAN PASTE USED IN KOGETSUAN'S MONAKA IS CHUNKY.

THE SOFT, TEXTURED PASTE BECOMES ONE WITH THE CRISP MONAKA CASE IN THE MOUTH.

WORKED OVER HEAT UNTIL THE SKINS BREAK,

CHAPTER 7
The Golden Rule

SIMMER

SIMMER

ZWUSH...

THE KEY...

...IS PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE.

ADD EQUAL PARTS COARSE SUGAR AND WORK IT OVER HEAT.

ONCE THE AZUKI BEANS ARE BOILED,

THIS IS WHAT DETERMINES THE TASTE.

WHEN IT LOSES A BIT OF LUSTRE AND TURNS A REDDISH PURPLE.

YOU CAN TELL IT'S DONE...

...AND YOU TURN THE HEAT OFF TOO EARLY.

R...

RIGHT.

THE FLAME'S TOO STRONG WHEN YOU'RE WORKING IT...

NOPE.
NO GOOD.

URK!

I HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT TSUBAKI TEACHING ME...

FOR NOW, I'VE GOT TO FOCUS ON THIS.

IT'S NOT EASY.

...BUT BEAN PASTE IS THE SOUL OF WAGASHI.

...

ANOTHER HARD DAY, TOMIOKA-SAN?

HOW IS THE KITCHEN?

I STARTED WITHOUT YOU.

TRUE, WHAT WITH THAT GIRL HANGING AROUND ALL THE TIME.

HAVEN'T THINGS GOTTEN TROUBLE-SOME?

YOU SHOULD FEEL FREE TO MANAGE THINGS AS YOU SEE FIT.

KOGETSUAN IS WHAT IT IS TODAY...

...THANKS TO YOU, TOMIOKA-SAN.

Sign: Kogetsuan

光月庵

I SAID, WE CAN'T LET YOU USE THE KITCHEN.

YOU'RE GETTING IN OUR WAY.

...WHAT?

I—

JUST GET OUT, WILL YOU?

ANYWAY.

IT BOTHERS YOU, TOO, RIGHT?

YAMA-GUCHI-SAN.

THEN I'LL MOVE OVER TO THE CORNER, SO...

U-UM...

IF I CAN'T USE THE KITCHEN, I CAN'T MAKE BEAN PASTE...

NO...

WHAT IF THE TASTE OF YOUR MEDIOCRE BEAN PASTE CONTAMINATES THEM?

DON'T USE THE POTS, EITHER.

I'M SORRY, TOMIOKA-SAN.

IT'S AN IMPORTANT CHANCE FOR THE SHOP TO REDEEM ITSELF.

IT'S JUST UNTIL WE DELIVER SHIRAFUJIYA'S ORDER.

THAT'S NOT MY PROBLEM.

WHAT IF THIS ISN'T A REQUEST...

...BUT AN ORDER?

I ONLY TAKE ORDERS FROM ONE PERSON.

AND THAT'S OLD MASTER TAKATSUKI.

I'M NOT HERE TO MAKE YOUR SWEETS.

光月

TSUBAKI-SAN,

YOU'RE STILL IN TRAINING, AREN'T YOU?

Uniform: Kogetsu

!

カリ

TSUBAKI-SAN.

NOT EVER.

THE HEAD OF KOGETSUAN IS OLD MASTER TAKATSUKI.

...!

YOU DON'T HAVE ANY AUTHORITY HERE.

<!!>

GRIP

光月

...

YOU'RE RIGHT, TOMIOKA-SAN.

W...

WAIT, TSUBAKI-SAN.

I THOUGHT TSUBAKI HAD COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THIS PLACE...

BUT...

...I WAS WRONG...

DAMN IT!!

YOU'RE AWFULLY ROUGH ON YOUR PRECIOUS HANDS.

I HAVE A REQUEST.

PLEASE GIVE ME THE AUTHORITY TO MANAGE THE KITCHEN.

IS THIS YOUR DOING, GRAND-FATHER?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

AM I GETTING SENILE?

I THOUGHT WE DISCUSSED THIS LAST WEEK.

I ONLY GRANT AUTHORITY...

...TO THE OFFICIAL HEIR OF THIS SHOP.

...BELONG TO THAT ONE PERSON.

AND THE TOOLS STASHED OVER THERE...

TSUBAKI CAN'T INHERIT KOGETSUAN.

BECAUSE HE'S NOT MY ACTUAL GRANDSON.

I CAN'T GRANT THEM TO YOU.

U...

UM...

NAO-SAN, WAS IT?

ARE YOU MARRYING TSUBAKI KNOWING THIS?

WHAT...?

RATTLE
RATTLE

WOW...

THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL...

WAGASHI NOTES

THEIR SPECIALTY AT THE TIME WAS *MANJU*,

BUT THE OWNER'S FAVORITE APPRENTICE STOLE THE RECIPE.

ONCE, 120 YEARS AGO...

WAGASHI NOTES

THE APPRENTICE STARTED HIS OWN SHOP...

...KO-GETSUAN...

...AND KOGETSUAN COULDN'T MAKE THEIR *MANJU* ANYMORE.

ALMOST WENT OUT OF BUSINESS.

EVER SINCE THEN...

TSURU ═══ HEIKICHI

CHIYO ═══ SHOICHI

YAE YOSHIO HATSU ═══ TAKEO

KENSHIRO SACHIKO ═══ SOJURO CHIYOKO FUMIKO KAZUKO ═══ SHIRO SEISABURO SOJIRO

THAT BECAME THE SHOP'S GOLDEN RULE.

KOGETSUAN HAS VALUED BLOOD ABOVE ALL, AND REFUSES TO ENTRUST THE SHOP TO ANYONE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY.

FOR 15 YEARS...

...THESE TOOLS...

HAVE BEEN LYING HERE WITH NO ONE TO USE THEM.

THESE TOOLS SYMBOLIZE THAT LINEAGE.

TOOLS EMBODY THE CONFECTIONER'S SOUL.

THESE ARE HANDED DOWN THE LINE, ONLY TO THE OFFICIAL HEIR.

IS...

IS IT TRUE...?

SO TSUBAKI...

15 YEARS...

...

THAT'S WHAT HE BELIEVES.

A CHILD BORN FROM THE PROPRIETRESS'S INFIDELITY.

...HIS REAL GRAND-SON...?

THAT YOU'RE NOT...

THAT MEANS...

IT'S TRUE, THEY DON'T LOOK ALIKE.

THE YOUNG MASTER DIED NEVER KNOWING.

THE POOR MAN...

APPARENTLY HE'S ILLEGITIMATE

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT BLOOD RELATIVES?

IT'S RIDICULOUS.

TSUBAKI.

SOMEDAY, THIS SHOP WILL BE YOURS.

HEY, TSUBAKI. YOU AND ME, TOGETHER—

THE IMPORTANT THING...

IS MY PASSION FOR *WAGASHI*.

MY DETERMI-NATION.

I MADE A PROMISE.

I WON'T LET...

...ANYONE ELSE HAVE THESE.

TSUBAKI.

WHAT WAS IT YOU SAW?

COULD YOU HAVE ACTUALLY SEEN MY MOMMA THERE?

I COULDN'T ASK.

BECAUSE IF HE ANSWERED "YES"—

NAO-SAN.

I'M SCARED.

JOJIMA-KUN.

I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU.

I WANTED TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING, NAO-SAN.

HERE...

HUH?

IT'S LIKE I DON'T EVEN KNOW...

...WHAT TO BELIEVE ANYMORE...

AUTHENTIC KOGETSUAN BEAN PASTE.

USE IT TO MAKE THE *MONAKA*.

MADE IN-SHOP YESTERDAY.

BEAN PASTE?

DON'T WORRY, IT'S JUST A BIT. THEY'LL NEVER MISS IT.

BUT YOU CAN'T GO TO SHIRAFUJIYA IF YOU CAN'T MAKE THE *MONAKA*.

YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE, JOJIMA-KUN.

N-NO... YOU CAN'T.

I WANT YOU TO STAY HERE, NAO-SAN.

AS A MUTUAL *AZUKI*-LOVING BUDDY.

カリ
CLATTER

KYOKO-SAN,

I DON'T THINK IT'S GOOD TO DO THIS ON THE PREMISES.

CALLING ME LIKE THIS...

WELL...

SQUEEZE

I SUPPOSE THIS ISN'T SO BAD.

HEY... GET ME MY OWN SHOP SOON, YEAH?

Y...

YOU'RE AWFULLY SLEAZY, TOMIOKA-SAN.

YOU'RE...

WON'T YOU GIVE US THE KITCHEN BACK...

...TOMIOKA-SAN?

CHAPTER 8
Tasty Bean Paste

HUH?!

庵月光

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO USE IT?

THIS BEAN PASTE.

Sign: Kogetsuan

BECAUSE IT'S CHEATING IF YOU USE THE SHOP'S BEAN PASTE?

...

YEAH, I THINK I NEED TO MAKE IT MYSELF.

NO.

I JUST THOUGHT I'D BE MISSING OUT.

I FIGURE I CAN SNEAK IN AND USE THE KITCHEN AFTER WORK ENDS AT 10 PM, UNTIL THE MORNING.

...HOW THIS FEELS.

WHEN DO I EVER GET TO MAKE THIS MUCH BEAN PASTE?

IF I MESS UP, I GET TO MAKE MORE.

DOZENS...

HUNDREDS OF TIMES.

I FOR-GOT...

THERE'S NOTHING MORE EXCITING, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT!

I CAN'T AFFORD TO GET KICKED OUT, YOU KNOW.

OH! BUT I *WILL* USE THIS AS A LAST RESORT.

HUH?

...AS A CONFEC-TIONER IN TRAINING.

UM... I FEEL SO EMBAR-RASSED NOW...

I'VE GOTTA...

...WORK HARD TO GET PUT IN CHARGE OF BEAN PASTE SOON, TOO.

SO WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE A CONFECTIONER, JOJIMA-KUN?

MY FAMILY RUNS A *WAGASHI* SHOP. A SMALL PLACE IN NOTO CALLED SHIMAYA.

I CAME HERE FOR TRAINING.

THE HEIR TO A WAGASHI SHOP...

JUST LIKE TSUBAKI.

I NEED TO MASTER THINGS QUICKLY SO MY FOLKS DON'T WORRY.

JOJIMA-KUN, YOU'VE GOT BEAN PASTE UNDER YOUR EYE.

HUH? WHERE?

RIGHT HERE—

UH...?

HEY.

THAT'S MY WIFE.

OH...

I-I'M SORRY!

I...UH...

P-PLEASE EXCUSE ME!

THANKS, JOJIMA-KUN.

YOU'VE GOTTEN QUITE FRIENDLY.

...

NOD

IS HE... JEALOUS...?

HE CAN'T BE.

NO.

IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.

FOCUS ON THE BEAN PASTE NOW!

OOPS!

I'VE GOT TO GET THIS BATCH RIGHT.

I SAID "DOZENS OF TIMES"...

...BUT I DON'T WANT TO WASTE ANY MORE AZUKI.

FOUR HOURS TO BOIL...

...ONE HOUR TO WORK THE PASTE.

BARELY ENOUGH TIME UNTIL MORNING.

NOW THAT YOU KNOW I'M NOT THE OFFICIAL HEIR...

...YOU MUST...

...HAVE LOST INTEREST IN MARRYING ME, RIGHT?

...

...YOU WERE GOING TO LEAVE.

I WAS SURE...

BEAN PASTE IS MY ASPIRATION.

SO I WANT SHIRAFUJIYA...

TO TRY MY BEAN PASTE, NO MATTER WHAT.

"ASPIRATION"?

AS A KID... I...

...LOVED WHEN MY MOTHER READ ME MY FAVORITE PICTURE BOOKS.

RUNAWAY ELEPHANT

THE MAYBE TREE BY HIROKO ASAMA

MY FOOD

I LOVE YOU

THE CAT WHO BECAME A DOG

...

...IT WAS DIFFERENT WHEN SHE WAS MAKING BEAN PASTE.

BUT...

IF I ASKED...

...SHE'D FIND TIME, NO MATTER HOW BUSY SHE WAS.

THE CAT WHO BECAME A DOG

EVEN AS A KID, I THOUGHT...

"BEAN PASTE'S AMAZING!"

THAT IT MUST BE EVEN MORE FUN, AND PRETTY, AND EXCITING THAN A PICTURE BOOK.

SHE WOULDN'T BUDGE FROM THE BEAN PASTE.

ALMOST AS IF SHE DIDN'T EVEN SEE ME.

SHE'D STARE AT THE PASTE...

...THE WHOLE DAY.

AND THAT I WANTED TO MAKE IT SOMEDAY, TOO.

WAS YOUR MOTHER ALSO A CONFECTIONER?

はっ GASP

BUT SHE MUST HAVE MADE TASTY BEAN PASTE.

N... NO.

JUST AT HOME ...

SHE'D MAKE SWEETS SOME-TIMES.

IT'S OBVIOUS WHEN SOMEONE WHO'S SAD OR FRUSTRATED MAKES BEAN PASTE.

EMOTIONS ARE NO EXCEPTION.

...DEPENDING ON ROOM TEMPERATURE, HEAT, TIME... ALL KINDS OF FACTORS.

THE TASTE OF BEAN PASTE REALLY VARIES...

IN OTHER WORDS ...

...IT'S A SELF-REFLECTION— A MIRROR.

"A SELF-REFLECTION"...

WHENEVER I MAKE BEAN PASTE...

THAT'S WHY,

...IT SCARES ME A LITTLE.

HI

WUSH

...

HEY,

ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME FOR THE *SHIBU-GIRI*?

!

OH, RIGHT!

GASP

はっ

TSUBA—

...WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT JUST NOW...

I WONDER...

CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP

庭月光

Sign: Kogetsuan

IT'S PERFECT KOGETSUAN BEAN PASTE.

THE BEANS ARE MASHED JUST RIGHT.

IT'S THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SUGAR...

...AND THE MOISTURE IS AT A GOOD LEVEL.

YOU DON'T THINK KOGETSUAN'S BEAN PASTE IS TASTY, DO YOU?

ギリ URK!

THANK GOOD-NESS!

WHEW.

BUT,

IT'S MISSING SOME-THING.

OH...

WH...

WHY...

WHAT IS IT LIKE?

YOUR IDEA OF TASTY BEAN PASTE.

LET'S SEE IT.

LIKE I SAID.

BEAN PASTE IS A MIRROR.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

YOU'RE AWFULLY SLEAZY, TOMIOKA-SAN.

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE WOULD HAPPEN IF PEOPLE IN THIS HONOR-ABIDING INDUSTRY FOUND OUT THAT YOU'RE INTIMATE WITH THE PROPRIETRESS?

THAT GIRL.

SHE'S USING THE KITCHEN LIKE SHE OWNS IT.

LET THEM USE THE KITCHEN.

W...

WELL, SO WHAT?

I'LL BE USING THE KITCHEN AS I LIKE.

MORE IMPORTANTLY,

ABOUT MY OWN SHOP...

HOW USELESS ARE YOU?

FIGURE IT OUT ON YOUR OWN.

DON'T YOU ***DARE*** TOUCH ME AGAIN.

KOGETSUAN'S *MONAKA* SKIN IS BAKED THIN WITH GLUTINOUS RICE FOR THE MOISTURE, RIGHT?

SSSH

SO I THINK IT'S BETTER TO AVOID MASHING THE BEANS TOO MUCH, TO RETAIN MORE OF THE TEXTURE.

PLUS, THE BEANS ARE HIGH QUALITY. I WANT TO BRING OUT THEIR FLAVOR BY CUTTING DOWN ON THE SWEETNESS.

YES!

LET ME USE THAT AS A SECRET INGREDIENT!

USING HONEY COULD BE GOOD.

NOT TOO SWEET, HUH?

THEY'RE DONE.

...

S...

SO?

EXCUSE ME.

TSUBAKI...

HEY...!

OH, MAY I?

WOULD YOU CARE TO TRY ONE?

WOW... THAT'S DELICIOUS!

CAN I BUY THESE?

I'M SORRY, THEY'RE NOT FOR SALE YET.

THAT'S A SHAME.

...WE'LL TAKE TO SHIRAFUJIYA.

THESE ARE THE *MONAKA*...

THERE'S ONE DECISIVE THING IN THIS BUSINESS.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS?

A...

ARE YOU SURE?

WHETHER SOMETHING IS DELICIOUS, THAT'S WHAT.

庵月光

Sign: Kogetsuan

WE'RE TAKING THESE MONAKA...

...TO SHIRAFUJIYA...

I DON'T KNOW!

WHENEVER I MAKE BEAN PASTE...

...IT SCARES ME A LITTLE.

I FEEL LIKE I SHOULDN'T...

...IGNORE THAT COMMENT OF HIS...

MY, MY. YOU REALLY DID COME.

I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP.

Curtain: Shirafujiya
Banner: Kimono shop

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE WAIT.

I BELIEVE WE'VE PREPARED *MONAKA* WE CAN PRESENT WITH PRIDE.

I'LL TRY IT.

DID NAO-SAN REALLY MAKE THESE?

THIS...

WHY, IT'S EXACTLY THE SAME.

THIS IS THE EXACT TASTE OF THE KOGETSUAN *MONAKA* I'VE ALWAYS HAD.

HOW IS IT?

THESE *MONAKA*...

THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT...

WHAT ...?

THE SAME?

IT TASTES THAT WAY TO ME.

UM, MAY I TRY A BITE?

WH...

WHY...?

I THINK YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT.

YOU MAINLY ORDERED *JO-NAMAGASHI,* NEVER ANY *MONAKA.*

I LOOKED OVER YOUR PAST ORDER FORMS AGAIN LAST NIGHT.

SHIRA-FUJIYA-SAN.

YOU'VE NEVER PREORDERED *MONAKA.*

THAT'S WHY I THOUGHT...

SOMETHING YOU STOP BY THE SHOP TO BUY...

...TO YOU, A *MONAKA* FROM KOGETSUAN IS SOMETHING YOU GET A SUDDEN CRAVING FOR IN YOUR DAY-TO-DAY.

THE SAME FAMILIAR FLAVOR...

...THAT MAKES YOU HAPPY FOR NO REASON AT ALL.

...TO HAVE WITH YOUR USUAL TEA,

IN YOUR FAVORITE PLACE, FOR A LITTLE BREAK...

IT'S BEEN A WHILE...

BUT THIS FLAVOR...

IT REALLY IS DELICIOUS.

YOU'RE ABSO-LUTELY RIGHT.

YES...

THAT'S RIGHT...

HAVING THIS *MONAKA*...

HAS MADE ME WANT TO KEEP EATING KOGETSUAN'S SWEETS IN THE FUTURE.

THANK YOU.

CHAPTER 9
Like a Married Couple

...YOUR WEDDING?

WHEN IS IT...?

SO...

AND YOU'RE FINE WITH THAT, NAO-SAN?

Y-YES.

NO.

THAT'S NOT RIGHT.

WE DON'T PLAN TO HAVE ONE.

BECAUSE THE MARRIAGE ITSELF IS A BIT OF A MESS.

YOU MAKE *WAGASHI*, SO ALL THE MORE REASON TO VALUE THOSE OCCASIONS.

EVENTS AND MILESTONES IN LIFE ARE ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED BY *WAGASHI*, TO ADD FLAIR TO THOSE MEMORIES.

...I HOPE WE'LL GET TO MAKE NAO-SAN'S KIMONO.

...WHEN YOU DO...

AND...

...THE *MONAKA* I CAME UP WITH?

ARE YOU ANGRY THAT I DIDN'T BRING...

BUT...

IN THE END, YOUR DECISION WAS THE RIGHT ONE.

NOT REALLY.

I DON'T HAVE A RIGHT TO SAY ANYTHING.

...I *AM* ANNOYED...

THAT YOU DIDN'T DISCUSS IT WITH ME.

DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME PANIC...

DID YOU WANT TO FEEL SUPERIOR?

IT'S BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU'D DISAGREE.

NO...

YOU WOULD! YOU MIGHT EVEN SWITCH THEM AT THE LAST MINUTE...

DON'T ASSUME THAT.

...

YEAH.

AND SHE WANTS TO KNOW WHEN OUR WEDDING IS.

SHIRAFUJIYA-SAN'S PRETTY RIDICULOUS.

フッ SMIRK

THAT'S RIGHT.

REAL MARRIAGE IS...

WANT TO TRY IT?

AND ACT...

...LIKE A MARRIED COUPLE FOR ONCE?

THIS IS JUST A TACTIC.

...FALLING FOR HIM.

I'M NOT...

OH, MY.

HOW CUTE.

YEAH.

THIS IS ALL IT TAKES TO LOOK LIKE WE'RE A COUPLE.

APPAR-ENTLY...

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE *THIS* HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE "EXACT SAME," TOO...

WHO KNEW IT'D BE SO EASY?

AND I THINK THAT MIGHT BE WHAT KOGETSUAN...

...TREASURES ABOUT ITS BEAN PASTE, TOO.

PEOPLE HOLD HANDS BECAUSE THEY LIKE EACH OTHER.

...SO PEOPLE SEE IT AND FEEL FUZZY INSIDE.

THE REASON'S ALWAYS BEEN THE SAME... FOR AGES.

MAYBE HE'LL UNDERSTAND.

ABOUT THE KITCHEN, TOO—

HEY.

WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A PROPER TALK WITH THE OLD MASTER?

YOU REALLY ARE NAÏVE.

JUST BECAUSE SHIRAFUJIYA-SAN ACKNOWLEDGED YOU A BIT...

...DOESN'T MEAN YOU UNDERSTAND ANYTHING.

I'M GOING ON AHEAD.

TSUBA—

A MISTY MOON.

IT MIGHT RAIN TOMOR-ROW.

ニャー MEOW

SO YOU TOOK...

...THE TRADITIONAL KOGETSUAN *MONAKA* TO SHIRAFUJIYA, EH?

OH. R-RIGHT.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

TAKE A SEAT THERE.

I INVITED HER.

WHY ARE YOU AT THE FAMILY DINNER TABLE?!

THAT DESERVES RESPECT.

IT'S THANKS TO HER WE DIDN'T LOSE SHIRAFUJIYA'S TRUST.

IT'S AWKWARD...

I'VE BEEN ALONE FOR SO LONG.

I HAVEN'T SHARED A MEAL WITH ANYONE IN A WHILE.

WE SHOULD CELEBRATE.

TSUBAKI, GO GET SOME SAKE.

ALL RIGHT.

...BUT IT'S KIND OF NICE.

NAO-SAN.

DO YOU MAKE *RAKUGAN*?

YOU UNDERSTAND WELL.

RAKUGAN ARE SO DELICATE THAT THEY CRUMBLE EASILY WITH THE SLIGHTEST FORCE.

YES.

THOUGH IT NEEDS WORK.

OF ALL THE *WAGASHI*, *RAKUGAN* ARE MY FAVORITE.

I THINK THEY REQUIRE EXCEPTIONAL SKILL.

BUT TSUBAKI INTENDS TO TAKE *RAKUGAN* OFF THE SHELVES...

...BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT SELLING WELL.

WHAT AN IDIOTIC IDEA.

THE INGREDIENTS AND RECIPE ARE INCREDIBLY SIMPLE,

SO THE CONFECTIONER'S STYLE DEFINES THEM.

A SINGLE PIECE ENCOMPASSES THE ENTIRE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY.

ABOVE ALL, THEY KEEP WELL FOR LONGER ENJOYMENT.

HE HAS NOTHING.

HE'S A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING AND A FOOL.

NO PRIDE AS A CONFEC-TIONER...

NO LOVE FOR *WAGASHI.*

TSUBAKI-SAN CARES ABOUT THIS SHOP AS MUCH AS YOU DO, SIR.

I DON'T THINK SO.

I SEE.

DO YOU...

...LOVE TSUBAKI?

I DO.

YOU LOVE HIM, EH?

DON'T LIE TO ME!

YOU DON'T EVEN LOOK AT EACH OTHER PROPERLY.

YOU TWO SAY YOU INTEND TO GET MARRIED,

AND YET YOU LIVE IN SEPARATE ROOMS.

YOU CAN'T FOOL ME.

TWO WOMEN CAME INTO THIS HOUSE.

ONE WAS *THIS* DECEPTIVE WITCH.

...

TSUBAKI...

SHE LIED, SAYING SHE LOVED MY SON...

...IS ABSOLUTELY HIS REAL SON.

...THEN BETRAYED HIM,

AND GAVE US A BASTARD CHILD.

SILENCE.

THE OTHER CAME,

SAYING SHE WAS A ***CONFEC-TIONER.***

THAT WOMAN TOOK MY SON'S LIFE.

WHAT...

...DO *YOU* INTEND TO TAKE FROM ME?

YOU...

WHAT PRECIOUS THING...

...DO YOU WANT TO TAKE FROM ME?

NO!

DON'T!

COULD YOU REFRAIN...

...FROM ABUSING MY WIFE?

TSUBAKI-SAN!

HOW COULD YOU?! THAT'S YOUR GRAND-FATHER...!

YOU'RE COMING TO MY ROOM.

CHAPTER 10
In One Room

STARTING TONIGHT,

NAO AND I WILL SHARE A ROOM.

I ASSUME YOU HAVE NO COMPLAINTS?

ALL THE WOMEN WHO SHOWED AFFECTION FOR YOU...

YOU HURT THEM HORRIBLY.

WHY WOULD IT BE ANY DIFFERENT THIS TIME?

YOU THINK YOU CAN PROVIDE HAPPINESS?

LET'S GO.

THANK YOU, GRAND-FATHER.

I HELD BACK SO FAR BECAUSE THE FAMILY WAS AGAINST OUR MARRIAGE.

BUT I'M GLAD IT SEEMS YOU'VE ACKNOWL-EDGED US.

スズ

I...

...COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING BACK.

THAT WOMAN TOOK MY SON'S LIFE.

I HATE THIS.

NOT ONE THING...

FWUMP

ぱっ GASP

Y-YEAH.

I'M FINE.

ARE YOU FEELING BETTER?

...

SORRY...

YOU REALLY DON'T OWN MUCH.

THAT CLOSET'S OPEN, SO USE IT AS YOU LIKE.

...

I SAID TALKING TO EACH OTHER MIGHT SOLVE THINGS...

AS IF...

...IT WOULD BE SO EASY...

I REALLY AM SORRY.

HEY...

SQUEEZE...

...

OH.

THE OLD MASTER ISN'T WATCHING ANYMORE.

WE DON'T NEED TO DO THIS.

HEY!

SLAM

I THOUGHT YOU CAME WITH THIS KIND OF THING IN MIND,

BUT I GUESS NOT.

SORRY ABOUT THAT.

WHY...

...AM I SO FLUSTERED?

I THOUGHT I WAS PREPARED FOR THIS.

W...WAIT.

HEY...

WH-WHY DON'T WE CHAT INSTEAD, AFTER ALL?

THERE'S A YUMMY PLACE ACROSS THE WAY.

COME ON.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE ME ANYMORE, JUST SAY IT.

IT'S KIND OF A TURN OFF.

YOU LOOK SO HAPPY MAKING SWEETS, NAO...

...BUT YOU DON'T SMILE MUCH OTHERWISE.

N...

NO, I...

WHY REMEMBER THAT NOW...?

BUT I WAS SCARED...

...TO LET HIM FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ME.

RATTLE

ガラッ

DON'T TURN IT OFF.

I CAN'T SLEEP WHEN IT'S DARK.

OH.

SORRY.

TSUBAKI'S ROOM...

TH-THIS ROOM...

...

...IT'S SURPRISINGLY SMALL.

IT'S THE SAME ROOM I USED AS A KID.

MY HEART WOULD FLUTTER EVERY TIME I CAME HERE...

"NAO"...

THAT'S RIGHT, THIS ROOM...

I SNUCK IN HERE A FEW TIMES BACK THEN TO SEE TSUBAKI...

...IS "SAKURA," YEAH?

OH, HE MEANS THE KANJI.

...YEARS AGO...

"SEVEN"...

..."SAKURA."

HUH...?

...A GIRL...

NAMED SAKURA LIVED IN THIS HOUSE.

WE ALWAYS USED TO MAKE SWEETS TOGETHER HERE.

...

WH...

WHAT WAS...

SHE LIKE?

TSUBAKI.

HE REMEMBERS, TOO.

...

...SHE WAS QUIET,

...AND CRIED A LOT...

BUT...

...SHE WAS MY ONLY LIGHT.

...IN THIS DARK HOUSE...

SAKURA.

TAP...

IT HAS A GOOD APOLLO MOUNT.

YOUR HAND...

I THOUGHT SOMETHING MIGHT CHANGE IF I HAD THIS HAND BY MY SIDE.

I NOTICED WHEN WE FIRST MET.

THIS KIND OF HAND SEIZES SUCCESS.

SSH

WHISH

IF ALL SHE'S AFTER IS KOGETSUAN'S NAME...

...SHE'S NO DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS.

SHE AGREED TO MARRY A MAN SHE JUST MET...

...SO I THOUGHT I'D JUST USE HER THE WAY I WANT.

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.

SO,

WHY...

...ARE YOU...

TSUBAKI-SAN REALLY DOES CARE ABOUT THIS SHOP.

ぱさ FLIP

TSUBAKI!

I CAN'T.

I KNOW
I CAN'T,
BUT...

...THE GIRL I ONCE WAS ANYMORE...

IT'S TSUBAKI'S FAULT...

...I'M NOT...

I HATE HIM SO MUCH, AND YET...

I HATE HIM.

SHE WAS MY ONLY LIGHT.

...WHO SHE IS?

DID YOU FIND OUT...

SO?

Sign: Kogetsuan

庵月光

INVESTIGATION REPORT

FORMER NAME...

Nao Hanaoka
Birth date: 1996
Blood type: A
Former name: Nao Okura

NAO...

OKURA.

THOUGH IT TOOK US SOME TIME.

INVESTIGATION REPORT

MATCH?

Nametag: Nao Okura, **Uniform:** Kogetsu

PHOTO, FIVE YEARS OLD

...THAT GIRL,

"SAKURA," APPEARED NOW...

IF...

HEY.

TSU-BAKI...

...SAN...

...WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

...APPEARED NOW...?

IF "SAKURA"...

I'D HAVE HER DISAPPEAR.

ドドドド

BDMP

ドドドド

BDMP

BDMP

OUT OF MY SIGHT, *FOREVER.*

To be continued in Volume 3

Something's Wrong With Us

SIX O'CLOCK!

S...SIX O'CLOCK ?

My editor

THEY FIRE UP THE POTS AT 6 AM TO START MAKING BEAN PASTE.

6 AM AT THE SHOP... CAN YOU MAKE IT?

I REALIZED JUST HOW SERIOUS THE PROCESS IS...

I GOT THE CHANCE TO SEE HOW IT'S PRODUCED AT AKASAKA AONO, THE HISTORIC WAGASHI SHOP IN AKASAKA, TOKYO.

"BEAN PASTE" IS A MAJOR TOPIC IN THIS VOLUME.

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

THEY WERE MAKING SMOOTH BEAN PASTE THAT DAY, WHICH APPARENTLY TAKES LONGER THAN THE CHUNKY VARIETY.

Curtain: Aono

SO I ENDED UP GOING AROUND 7:30 AM.

THEY SAID THE BOILING ITSELF IS AUTOMATIC AND THERE MIGHT NOT BE MUCH TO SEE,

...WELL... IT'S JUST **BEANS** IN THE END.

I LIKE CHUNKY BEAN PASTE BETTER. ISN'T IT NICE TO HAVE A LITTLE TEXTURE?

THERE'S A SPLIT BETWEEN SMOOTH AND CHUNKY BEAN PASTE LOVERS, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY FAVORS THE SMOOTH KIND.

I SEE.

The Company President

URK.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

INGREDIENT RATIOS AND HOW LONG IT TAKES SHOWS IN THE FLAVOR,

BUT SMOOTH BEAN PASTE TELLS YOU WHAT EXACTLY MAKES EACH SHOP TASTY.

I SEE SMOOTH BEAN PASTE DIFFERENTLY NOW, AND I LOVE IT.

SO THERE'S MORE TO SMOOTH BEAN PASTE. THE CHUNKY STUFF...

TO BE CONTINUED...

Thank you so much for reading. See you again in the next volume!

Natsumi Ando

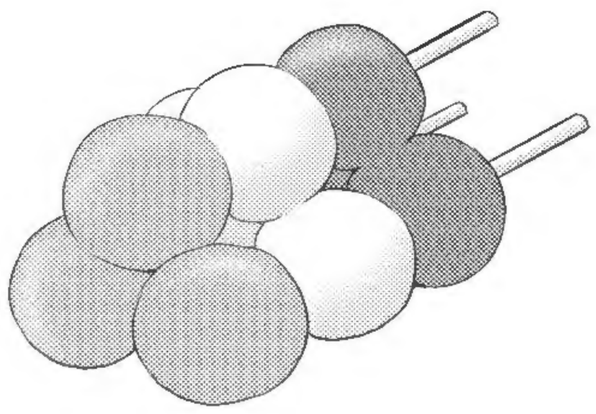
Something's Wrong With Us

Natsumi Ando

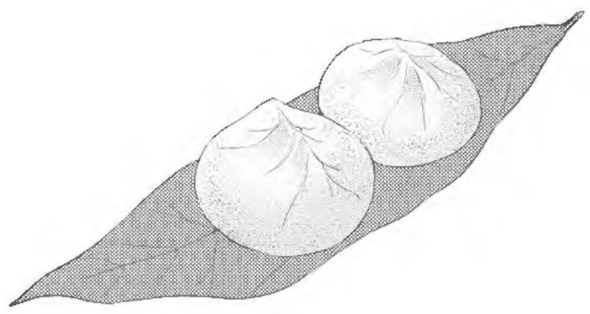
When making *wagashi*, the same pink color varies by the day depending on my mood. It reminds me how amazing it is…how much skill confectioners have…that they can make the same color every time, no matter how many they make.

Translation Notes

wagashi, page 2
Traditional Japanese confections.

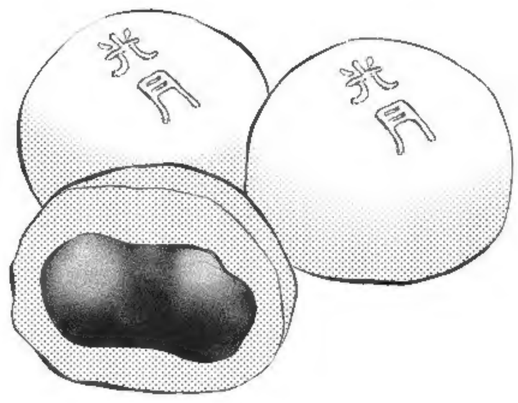


dango, page 13
Small balls of *mochi* (pounded glutinous rice) on a skewer. *Dango* for a cherry blossom viewing event are usually colored pink, white, and green.

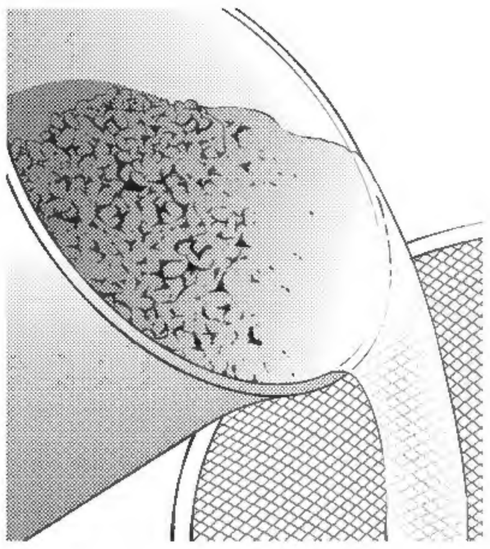


kuri kinton, page 13
A ball of sweet chestnut paste shaped to look like a chestnut. This *wagashi kuri kinton* is different from the *"kuri kinton"* eaten during the Japanese New Year, which is a mixture of candied chestnuts and mashed sweet potatoes.

monaka, page 31
Two crispy wafers made of rice flour with a sweet filling (usually bean paste) sandwiched in between.



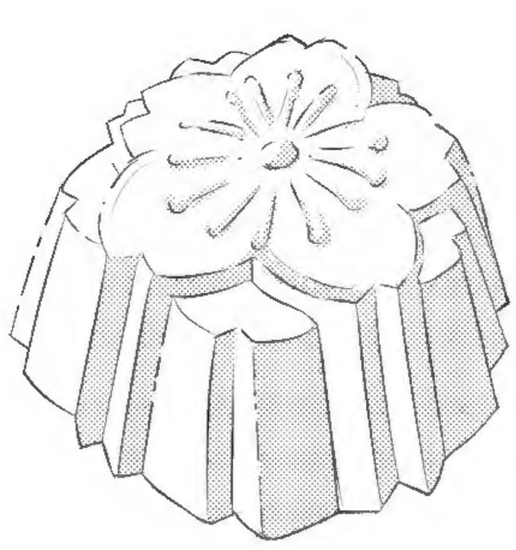
manju, page 51
A steamed, bite-sized bun with some kind of sweet filling, usually bean paste.



shibugiri, page 77
Literally "cutting the bitterness." This is the process of pouring away the water once the *azuki* beans come to a boil. This is repeated several times to remove the bitter taste from the beans.

Shirafujiya-san, page 92
Shirafujiya is the name of the store, and Shirafuji isn't necessarily the owner's name, but when people run a business—especially in retail—they can be addressed by the store's name with the *-san* honorific attached.

jo-namagashi, page 92
Fresh, artistic *wagashi* that are made with motifs that are usually seasonal.



rakugan, page 112
Delicate, pressed sugar candies made with *wasanbon* sugar (a fine-grained sugar with a distinctive taste used for *wagashi*) and starch. They're made using traditional wooden molds and come in all kinds of colors and shapes.

Apollo mount, page 140
In palm reading, this part located at the base of the ring finger is associated with artistic ability and success.

Something's Wrong With Us

Something's Wrong With Us 2

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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